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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: PRT ANBAR: ANBARIS PERCEIVE IRANIAN INFLUENCE,
BOTH IN BAGHDAD AND AT HOME

REF: A. BAGHDAD 0089
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 0289
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 0178

Classified By: Anbar PRT Team Leader Paul Fitzgerald for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar (Ramadi) cable.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Iranian attempts to exert influence in Anbar Province face a significant obstacle: Anbar is 96% Sunni and Anbaris view Iran as Iraq's mortal enemy. Most of PRT's interlocutors believe that Iran has been meddling in Iraq not only through the Accountability and Justice Commission's de-Ba'athification activities in Baghdad, but also closer to home in influencing the GOI's placement of high-ranking security officials in Anbar province itself. It is important to note, however, that up to now these Anbari concerns have not prevented the provincial government from working with the GoI to further local interests. END SUMMARY.

TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS SEE IRANIAN INFLUENCE EVERYWHERE
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[1](#)3. (C) In meetings on January 16 and February 9, six paramount Anbari sheiks told PRToffs that the Accountability and Justice Committee's exclusion of candidates is proof-positive of Iranian efforts to directly control the GoI. The sheikhs stress the illegality of the AJC's activities and believe that de-Ba'athification is one part of Iran's strategy to prevent free and fair elections that would guarantee Sunnis their share in the Iraqi polity. The sheikhs perceive PM Maliki as being enthralled with Iranian leadership and as enabling Iran to carry out its designs on Iraq. (NOTE: The six paramount sheikhs were Sheikh Khamis Abd al Karim Mukhlif al-Fahadawi, Paramount Sheikh of the albu Fahad Tribe; Sheikh Ahmed Aboud al Ilyad al-Chulaybawi, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu Chulayb Tribe; Sheikh Mohammad Oda Mutlaq Sulayman al-Ilyawi, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu Ali Jassim Tribe; Sheikh Hamid Rashid Muhanna Muhammad Salih al-Alwani, Paramount Sheikh Albu Alwan Tribe; Sheikh Hamid Turki Zaybn al-Shawka al-Thiyabi, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu Thiyab Tribe; Sheikh Hatim Abd al Razzaq al-Gaoud al-Nimrawi, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu Nimr Tribe. END NOTE.)

[1](#)4. (C) Sheikhs believe that Maliki's ties to Iran directly impact Anbar itself through Maliki's alleged politicization of security portfolios. As evidence, they cite Maliki's direct appointment of sMG Baha Husayn Abid Hasan al-Karkhi as the interim Provincial Chief of Police (PCOP) (ref A), sMG AbdAl-Aziz Mohammed Jasim Ahmad al-Mufriji's appointment as the Anbar Operations Center (AOC) Commander last summer, and the establishment of the Operations Center itself. These

officials are "outsiders" who are not from Anbar, but who have significant authority in the provincial government. (Comment: The sheikhs fail to explain a direct connection between the reshuffling of security officials and Iranian influence in the GoI. End Comment.) Some have expressed a belief that an Iranian-influenced GoI is behind the attempted assassination of Governor Qassim on December 30, ostensibly over a dispute between him and SMG Aziz over the presence of the Iraqi Army inside Anbari cities. The result, as one sheikh put it, is that "now things (in Anbar) are being run by the PM's office" (ref B).

15. (C) The Anbari religious leadership views the question of Iranian influence very similarly to the tribal leadership, though perhaps less radically. Anbar Sunni Endowment leaders say that they, and many "in the street," feel that the AJC Qsay that they, and many "in the street," feel that the AJC move is part of a broader effort to marginalize Sunni politicians. They feel that not only is the AJC directed by Iran, but that IHEC itself is compromised. At the end of a January 16 conversation with PRT Officers, Sheikh Riyadh, the deputy leader of the Sunni Endowment in Anbar, summed up this view by rhetorically asking "Why is our country being handed to Iran on a gold plate?" (ref C).

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP MORE PRAGMATIC
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16. (C) Whatever their private views on the subject, provincial government officials in Anbar have not openly espoused belief in an Iranian takeover of the GoI, nor have they allowed popular passions to affect their willingness or ability to work with the government in Baghdad to advance their own agenda. Governor Qassim frequently met with PM

Maliki and appeared to enjoy an open-door policy with him. He also worked energetically with government ministries to advance reconstruction efforts in the province. The provincial government has been working well with interim PCOP SMG Baha; this supposed Iranian agent has enjoyed the support and grudging admiration of the Anbari government for his efforts to combat corruption and improve the readiness of the Anbar police force.

17. (C) In politics too, pragmatism carries the day. Sheikh Ahmed abu Risha, one of the most-watched political aspirants in the upcoming election, has espoused the most extreme views on Iranian influence in Iraq. On one occasion, he threatened to lead a walkout of the provincial government in protest of the appointment of SMG Baha. Another time, he threatened to call for a boycott of the 2010 elections. Both were empty threats, populist posturing for the benefit of his constituents (ref B). Behind the scenes, Sheikh Ahmed has given tacit approval for many of the decisions he outwardly condemns.
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